

To the Committee of Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

Subject: SB 1052 Hearing
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Thanks for your interest in clean beaches, our **biggest resource for water, recreation and tourism**. I speak for 10 neighboring beach owners including my wife and myself. We decided in 2008 to start cleaning, using our own money, the **beaches, overgrown with phragmites, polluted with poisonous muck, foot thick layers of washed up seaweed and a health hazard, no longer fit for use** by us the property owners, our grandkids, beach walkers from the nearby park, fish and wildlife. The **smell was** & is on adjoining properties **repelling**. Hundreds of carps had, prior to involvement of the DEQ, spawned each year in front of our property.

Phragmites

Statement of DEQ (from meeting around 2002)

Declared Great Lakes shore as wetlands with **regrowing vegetation**, phragmites not to be touched. Good for wildlife @ fish

Statement of Sea Grant – NOAA

...Phragmites ...are **invasive** aquatic plants that also **endanger** our **waters and wetlands**. (2012 handout: *Protect our Waters*)

Timeline of Events

1985 pristine sand beaches when we bought property at Lake Huron

1986 **water levels rose** to a level, almost 5 foot above current level

Our 5 feet high by 20 foot deep sandbank, covered with deep-rooting grasses was washed away in 1 single storm

People tried to protect structures and banks along beach

High bank sections were washed away by wave actions

Trees along shoreline were uprooted

Shoreline property owners cleaned up

1999 **"As Great Lakes Shrink, a wave of Alarm swells"** (The Detroit News August 25, 1999)

Lake property owners got concerned about low water levels, suspected Government Agency involvement through improper dredging at entrance of St. Clair River and/or help to increase water level of the Mississippi River

Remarks: *2012 May* Lake Huron water level 577.50 feet above sea level
Cyclical fluctuation of Lake Huron water levels *almost 6.5 foot*

Maximum October 1986: + 5 feet *in comparison to 2012*
Minimum in March 1964: - 1 foot 4 inches *in comparison to 2012*

- 2000 DEQ declares beaches wetlands with regrowing vegetation**
DEQ claims jurisdiction of land along the shore up to a height of 581.5 feet above sea level in order to hold the beaches in public trust
Property owners are no longer allowed to do beach maintenance activities or remove the phragmites an invasive plant
Even ridiculous bridge structures over the phragmites were required for resorts to give their guest access to the lake water
- 2001 Save Our Shores (SOS)**, a group of concerned lake property owners was founded.
Supported government agencies with research to better understand the environmental impact
- 2003 Shoreline Maintenance Bill:** Beach grooming and removal of vegetation allowed with permit
- 2006 Phragmites totally took over the beach, grandkids playing in the water get sick, a dog playing with them dies.**
Property values dropped but not the taxes
- 2008** The group of us 10 neighbors applied for group permit for spraying, beach grooming and removal of weirs overgrown with phragmites collecting muck, plugging up the free water flow.
- 2012 Pristine sand beaches for us 10 beach owners** (We spent about \$ 12.000)
We again have minnows!!!
Neighboring beach properties and beaches of public parks are still a mess
Beach walkers can still not reach us
We the beach owners have certainly no obligation to clean up the mess using our own money and with the required endless labor.
- ???? When will DEQ act on their responsibility as part of their public trust claim and clean public and private beaches** for use by lake property owners and tourists, remove the health hazard and give spawning fish a chance.

Conclusion

The above lists many good reasons to **accept SB 1052 and stop** a government agency **to further interfere** into beach maintenance activities.

The beach property owner was a better steward from the 30s till 2000

In case the Bill 1052 is rejected, the beach property owners expect:

DEQ cleaning up also the private beaches

Cutting in half the taxes for lakeshore properties, to the level of those homes West of Lakeshore Rd.

Collection of Thoughts

Seeing is believing!

In case you want to see the accomplishment of 10 lakeshore owners to clean the beaches in a joint effort and see the adjacent mess the DEQ caused, please come and visit. I am retired and can be available at any time that is convenient for you. A visit would save a lot of discussion time in the House.

Beach walking

- This hot issue is in the papers as a mandate for maintaining DEQ's influence on the beaches up to the *high water mark*. First of all, there were no fences on beaches prior to the take over of the DEQ. We did beach walking and enjoyed to talk to everyone passing. Whoever came was nice; the others don't make the effort.

There is no beach walking now because of the wall of Phragmites and the muck, thanks to the DEQ interference.

DEQ

- The DEQ uses freely the word *public trust* as justification for the need of their permits. Up to this point it was never mentioned that this claim includes also an obligation for the DEQ to keep those beaches pristine, healthy and useable. But up to this point nothing was done, not even at the state owned beaches, at least in our part of the Thumb area.

Wetlands

- Claims of *emerging wetlands* along the beaches of the Great Lakes was an irresponsible action of the DEQ. Changing water levels in a total of almost 6,5 feet, observed over decades, give and take beaches with storms and ice shaping them. There can be big changes from one day to the next. One day there are piles of gravel, followed by pristine sand the next day. Not even big trees are safe from being washed away in a single storm.

- The DEQ does not seem to be able to live up to up to their self-imposed trust. On the other hand, starting around the 30s, when having a car enabled people to own cottages along the Great Lakes, they kept the beaches clean and healthy at high and low waters. The mess started with the activities of the DEQ.

SOS

- *SOS is a group of dedicated people, which tries through their own efforts and money to clean their beaches, so they are again useable for their families, beach-walkers and let's not forget our tourists.*

- *SOS should be applauded for their pioneer work and efforts to regain clean beaches. SOS should obtain government support in their environmental improvement efforts at the Great Lakes shorelines without the use of one single tax dollar.*

Picture Attachment



Pict. 1: Is there a Lake behind?



Pict. 2: Who wants to go swimming here? – Can you smelt it?



Pict. 3: DEQ's "spawning area" - Do we have lung-fish?



Pict. 4: Tractor Pull – one got stuck in the mud



Pict. 5: with free flowing water the Sand overtakes DEQ's "emerging wetland"



*Pict. 6: **Beach Again** Apr 2012 - The tractor got stuck to the right of the big stone – now solid!*

Sources of Pictures: The attached pictures 1 to 3 and 5, containing phragmites, were taken on April 30, 2012 at neighboring properties, which did not participate in spraying. Our phragmites stands and muck situation looked identical.

Source: Department of the Army Detroit District, Corps of Engineers

